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Sen. Allen's legislation to improve school bus safety passed by Senate

LANSING – Legislation to help ensure student safety on school buses was passed by the Michigan Senate Tuesday, said Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City.

“One of the most important things we can do is to help make sure our children are safe when traveling to school and back home,” Allen said. “This legislation brings our statute in line with federal requirements and brings clarity to ambiguous sections of the law.”

Senate Bill 932 would update the Pupil Transportation Act to comply with federal regulations for school buses and school bus drivers and to conform to developments regarding construction of and equipment on school buses.

The Pupil Transportation Act regulates the construction requirements for school buses including the body, floor and painting requirements as well as individual parts such as mirrors, windshield washers and wipers, and lighting rules. The act also regulates the inspection of school buses and the requirements for drivers.

Sponsored by Allen, the bill will update the act to require school bus drivers to be in compliance with federal drug and alcohol testing, require slip resistant material for aisles and stairwells and require conformance with federal regulations for windshield wipers and washers, mirrors and lights on school buses. The bill also adds clear visibility guidelines for bus stops to ensure that students can board the bus in a safe environment and eliminated a loophole that could be used to avoid the requirements.

The act has not been fully updated since it was passed in 1990.

SB 932 is the result of numerous meetings of the Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee, which is comprised of representatives of schools, school employees, and the departments of education, state police, transportation and state.

“It is important we have the requirements for school bus drivers and buses spelled out clearly in state law,” Allen said. “We have not had a school bus fatality in a number of years and the updates we are making to this law will add another layer of security for Michigan K-12 students.”

SB 932 will now go before the House of Representatives for consideration.

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